

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: September 24, 2003

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS
(DOE/EIS-0285/SA-181- Noxon-Hot Springs/Taft-Hot Springs 39/2 to 44/1)

TO: Joe Johnson
Natural Resource Specialist - TFS/Kalispell

Proposed Action: Vegetation Management along the Noxon-Hot Springs/Taft-Hot Springs 39/2 to 44/1 Transmission Line ROW. The line is a 230kV and 500KV Double Circuit Transmission Line having an easement width of 250 feet. The proposed work will be accomplished in the indicated sections of the transmission line corridor as referenced in the attached checklist.

Location: The ROW is located in Sanders County, MT, being in the Spokane Region.

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation in the rights-of-ways and around tower structures that may impede the operation and maintenance of the subject transmission line. All work will be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards. BPA plans to conduct vegetation control with the goal of removing tall growing vegetation that is currently or will soon be a hazard to the transmission line. BPA's overall goal is to have low-growing plant communities along the rights-of-way to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation.

Analysis: This project meets the standards and guidelines for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

Planning Steps:

1. Identify the facility and the vegetation management need.

The work involved will be to clear tall growing vegetation that is currently or will soon pose a hazard to the lines and selectively eliminating tall growing vegetation *before* it reaches a height or density to begin competing with low-growing vegetation. All work will take place in existing rights-of-ways.

Also, all off right-of-way trees that are potentially unstable and will fall within a minimum distance or into the zone where the conductors swing will be removed. All work will be accomplished by selective vegetation control methods to assure that there is little potential harm to non-target vegetation and to low-growing plants. Desirable low-growing plants will not be disturbed. The work will provide system reliability.

The vegetation control is designed to provide an 8 to 10-year maintenance free interval. The overall vegetation management scheme will be to initially clear and remove all tall growing brush utilizing hand cutting and mulching methods as outlined in the attached checklist.

Future cycles - As tall growing species are controlled, an 8 to 10-year entry treatment will be needed. Also a review of danger trees and other hazards will take place at that time.

2. Identify surrounding land use and landowners/managers.

The subject corridor traverses USFS-Kootenai National Forest (39/2 to 39/2+679'), BLM (39/2+679 to 40/2+85) and private lands (40/2+85' to 44/1). Within corridor portion 42/3+50' to 40/3+530', there is an active landowner tree agreement in effect. All lands are forested type lands.

During routine patrols, tall, encroaching trees and vegetation issues are identified and marked. If a danger or reclaim tree is identified as a potential threat to the integrity of the transmission line, appropriate action to remove the tree is taken. Landowners were notified of the upcoming work by either telephone and/or letters. All issues seem to be resolved at this time.

3. Identify natural resources.

T&E Species and Habitats:

The subject corridor traverses several small creeks (i.e. Malone Creek, Quartz Creek and an unnamed creek) that drain into the Clark Fork River as verified through TView. Eventhough the Clark Fork River contains populations of Bull Trout, the creeks themselves are not known to contain these fish species. To avoid disturbing any potential fish habitat within these creeks, the following buffers and mitigation measures will be observed:

- Low-growing vegetation that provides shade will be protected. A 35-foot buffer will be observed to protect the streams canopy.
- Cut trees will not be felled into any stream unless directed to do so by the State or Federal fish & wildlife.
- Vehicles will be kept away from water channels to minimize erosion and sedimentation of waters.
- Standard erosion control practices will be employed, if necessary, to prevent sedimentation of waters.

Information concerning any T&E species and habitats within a ½ mile vicinity of the project area was verified by Tview2, Streamnet and the Northwest Subbasin Geographic Data Browser.

Wetland Resources:

No wetlands are present in the proposed work area as verified through existing databases.

Sensitive Areas:

No wetlands are present in the proposed work area as verified through existing databases.

Cultural Resources:

Ground disturbance will be minimal, so cultural resources, if present will not be affected.

Erosion Control:

Erosion potential will be minimal due to the low number of trees to be cut and the method of vegetation control (i.e. hand cutting). Based on the method of cutting, no mitigation will be necessary.

Issues concerning wildlife, fish, plants and cultural resources have been addressed and work within the project corridor is expected to have “no effect” on any listed species or cultural resources therefore there would be no cumulative effects for any T&E species identified within the project corridor. If any T&E animal activity is observed, project activity will be suspended until a revised assessment is performed.

Prior to the beginning of the work, the contractor will be provided with a set of the project maps, as well as with a list of management prescriptions from the Vegetation Management EIS.

4. Determine vegetation control and debris disposal methods.

A licensed contractor would undertake the proposed work. The unwanted vegetation would be removed by employing hand-cutting methods along selected spans of the right-of-way.

Debris will be disposed by:

Mulch - (Mulching is a debris treatment that falls between chipping and lop-and-scatter. The debris is cut into 1-to-2-ft. lengths, scattered on the right-of-way and left to decompose. This method is used when terrain and conditions do not allow the use of mechanical chipping equipment.)

5. Determine revegetation methods, if necessary.

No revegetation will be conducted at this time due to very low ground disturbance, equipment to be power washed to prevent the spread of weeds.

6. Determine monitoring needs.

An inspection will be performed at completion of work.

7. Prepare appropriate environmental documentation.

This Supplement Analysis finds that 1) the proposed actions are substantially consistent with the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285) and ROD, and; 2) there are no new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed actions or their impacts. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Michael A. Rosales

Michael A. Rosales
Environmental Scientist

CONCUR: /s/Robert Beraud for
Thomas C. McKinney
NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: 10/01/03

cc:

L. Croff – KEC-4
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M. Rosales – KEPR/Bell-1
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J. Lahti – TFS/Bell-1
M. McCracken – TFSU/Kalispell
Environmental File – KEC-4
Official File – KEP-4 (EQ-14)

Vegetation Management Checklist

1. IDENTIFY FACILITY AND THE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT NEED

1.1 Describe Right-of-way.

See Handbook — List of Right-of-way Components for checkboxes and the requirements for the components Rights-of-way, Access Roads, Switch Platforms, Danger Trees, and Microwave Beam paths.

Corridor Name	Corridor Length & kV	Easement width	Miles of Treatment
Noxon-Hot Springs/Taft-Hot Springs	230Kv & 500Kv	250 feet	5 miles

R/W Clearing and Clearing around Tower sites

1.2 Describe the vegetation needing management.

See handbook — [List of Vegetation Types, Density, Noxious Weeds](#) for checkboxes and requirements.

Vegetation Types:

Douglas Fir

Pine

Cottonwood

Density: High (250 + stems/per acre)

1.3 List measures you will take to help promote low-growing plant communities. If promoting low-growing plants is not appropriate for this project, explain why. See Handbook — for requirements and checkboxes.

Area is slow growing, when cut, no more major control will be needed for 8 to 10 years

1.4 Describe overall management scheme/schedule.

See Handbook - [Overall Management Scheme/Schedule](#).

Initial entry – Hand cut all tall growing brush

Subsequent entries – No other entries will be needed

Future cycles – 8 to 10 years

2. IDENTIFY SURROUNDING LAND USE AND LANDOWNERS/MANAGERS

2.1 List the types of landowners and land uses along your corridor.

See Handbook — [Landowners/Managers/Uses](#) for requirements, and [List of Landowners/Managers/Uses](#) for a checkbox list.

None, Forest type land

2.2 Describe method for notifying right-of-way landowners and requesting information (i.e., doorhanger, letter, phone call, e-mail, and/or meeting). Develop landowner mail list, if appropriate.

See Handbook — [Methods for Notification and Requesting Information](#) for requirements.

Telephone and or letters

2.3 List the specific land owner/landuse measures — determined from the handbook or through your consultations with the entities — that will be applied.

See handbook — [Requirements and Guidance for Various Landowners/Uses](#) for requirements and guidance, also [Residential/Commercial](#), [Agricultural](#), [Tribal Reservations](#), [FS-managed lands](#), [BLM –managed lands](#), [Other federal lands](#), [State/ Local Lands](#).

Span		Landowner/use	Specific measures to be applied
To	From		
39/2	39/2 +679'	USFS – Kootenai National Forest	Hand cut and much
39/2 +679'	40/2 +85'	BLM	Hand cut and much
40/2 +85'	44/1	PVT	Hand cut and much

2.4 Review any existing landowner agreements (e.g. tree/brush Permits or Agreements). List in table above any provisions that need to be followed and where they are located.

See handbook — [Landowner Agreements](#) for requirements.

Xmas Tree agreement 42/3 +50' to 40/3 +530'

2.5 List any known casual informal use of the right-of-way by non-owner publics. List any constraints or measure's to take due to the informal use.

See handbook — [Casual Informal Use of Right-of-way](#) for requirements.

None

2.6 List other potentially affected people, agencies, or tribes (that are not landowners/managers) that need to be notified or coordinated with. Describe method of notification and coordination.

See handbook — [Other Potentially Affected Publics](#) for requirements and suggestions.

None

3. IDENTIFY NATURAL RESOURCES

See Handbook — [Natural Resources](#)

3.1 List any water resources (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) that may be impacted by vegetation control activities. For each water body describe the control methods and requirements or mitigation measures that will be used.

See Handbook — [Water Resources](#) for requirements for working near water resources including buffer zones.

Span		Water body	Application Technique
To	From		
39/2 BOL	41/5 +450'	Edge of Clark Fork river	Hand cut
41/4 +160'		Swamp area	Hand cut

3.2 If planning to use herbicides, list locations of any known irrigation source, wells, or springs (landowners maybe able to provide this info if requested).

See Handbook — [Herbicide Use Near Irrigation, Wells or Springs](#) for buffers and herbicide restrictions.

Span		Well/irrigation/or spring	Herbicide	Buffer	Other notes/measures
To	From				
N/A		None known	None	N/A	N/A

3.3 List below the areas that have Threatened or Endangered Plant or Animal Species and the name of the species, and any special measures that need to be taken due to their presence. Attach any BAs, T&E maps, or letters from US Fish and Wildlife.

See Handbook — [T&E Plant or Animal Species](#) for requirements and determining presence.

None known

3.4 List any other measures to be taken for enhancing wildlife habitat or protecting species.

See Handbook — [Protecting Other Species](#) for requirements.

None

3.5 List any visually sensitive areas and the measures to be taken at these areas.

See Handbook — [Visual Sensitive Areas](#) for requirements.

None

3.6 List areas with cultural resources and the measures to be taken in those areas.

See Handbook – [Cultural Resources](#) for requirements.

Not Needed

3.7 List areas with steep slopes or potential erosion areas and the measure and methods to be applied in those areas.

See Handbook – [Steep/Unstable Slopes](#) for requirements.

N/A

3.8 List areas of spanned canyons and the type of cutting needed.

See Handbook – [Spanned Canyons](#) for requirements.

None

4. DETERMINE VEGETATION CONTROL METHODS

See Handbook — [Methods](#)

4.1 List Methods that will be used in areas not previously addressed in steps above.

See Handbook — [Manual](#), [Mechanical](#), [Biological](#), [Herbicides](#) for requirements for each of the methods.

Span		Methods, including herbicide active ingredient, trade name, application technique
To	From	
39/2	44/1	Hand Cutting only

5. DETERMINE DEBRIS DISPOSAL AND REVEGETATION

5.1 Describe the debris disposal methods to be used and any special considerations.

See Handbook — [Debris disposal](#) for a checkbox list and requirements.

Debris Disposal:

Mulch (Mulching is a debris treatment that falls between chipping and lop-and-scatter. The debris is cut into 1-to-2-ft. lengths, scattered on the right-of-way and left to decompose. This method is used when terrain and conditions do not allow the use of mechanical chipping equipment.)

5.2 List areas of reseeding or replanting (those areas not already described in steps 1, 2, or 3).

See Handbook — [Reseeding/Planting](#) for requirements.

None needed.

5.3 If not using native seed/plants, describe why.

None needed due to very low ground disturbances, equipment to be power washed to prevent the spread of weeds.

5.4 Describe timing and any follow-up that will need to take place to ensure germination/success of seeding/planting.

None

6. DETERMINE MONITORING NEEDS

See handbook — [Monitoring](#) for requirements.

6.1 Describe the follow-up/monitoring cycle that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the vegetation control methods used.

Check at completion of work

6.2 Describe any follow-up or monitoring needed to determine if mitigation measures were effective.

None

7. PREPARE APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

See handbook — [Prepare Appropriate Environmental Documentation](#) for requirements. . Also prepare Supplement Analysis — [Supplement Analysis](#) — for signature.

7.1 Describe any potential project impacts or project work that are different than those disclosed in the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS. Describe how those differences impact natural resources and if the differences are “substantial”.

None

7.2 Is there a need for additional NEPA documentation (i.e. Forest Service requirement, Record of Decision, supplemental EIS)? If so, attach.

No